

# LACQUER WORK

*A Practical Exposition of the Art of Lacquering  
together with Valuable Notes for the Collector*

BY  
G. KOIZUMI

WITH FOREWORD BY  
LT.-COL. E. F. STRANGE, C.B.E.  
OF THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

*Profusely Illustrated by Half-tone and Collotype Plates*



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## FOREWORD



HAVE been asked by Mr. G. Koizumi to write a few lines on the subject of this book; and he has rendered so much valuable assistance in connection with the collections of Oriental lacquer in the Victoria and Albert Museum, from the points of view both of the history and of the technique of the subject, that it gives me very great pleasure to comply with his request.

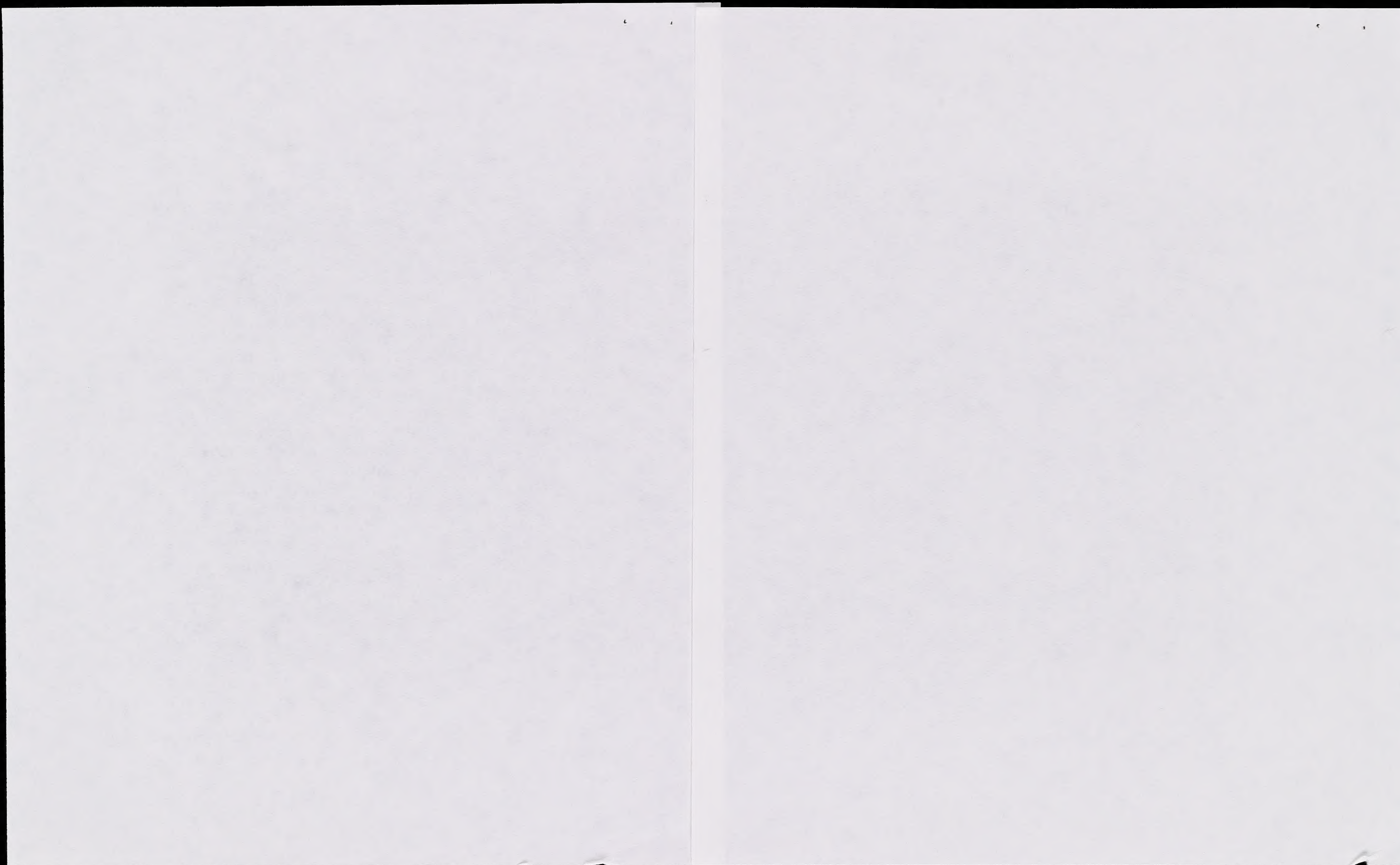
So much attention has recently been given to lacquer, that a work dealing with this interesting method of decoration, by one who has had many years of practical experience, cannot fail to be of value. It is all the more necessary, in view of the confusion that has arisen by the application of the term to processes that are essentially different, although, in their final results, they have the same superficial resemblance. The term lacquer, for example, is applied to the natural products of Japan and China—the sap of the *Rhus Vernicifera*, the lac produced by an insect, the *Coccus Lacca* of India, and the artificial products made in England, France, and Holland since the end of the seventeenth century in imitation of the fine work of the Far East. The Japanese and Chinese processes are beyond the powers of our craftsmen; but those now described by Mr. Koizumi can be carried out without much difficulty by those who have sufficient taste and application. Hitherto, the work done in this method has been restricted almost entirely to imitations of the lacquered furniture of the period of Queen Anne and her successors, done with such skill as often to raise doubts in the minds of experienced collectors. Now, there is no reason why a method of decoration capable of such excellent results, sound in principle, and able to stand many years of reasonable wear and tear, should be confined merely to imitations of the Chinese and Japanese patterns that happened to find favour in the eyes of our far-away

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ancestors. We need bright colour, and lacquer will give it to us; and in the production of furniture decorated with taste and imagination, in this method, many of our artists might well find a suitable and popular field for the display of their powers and originality. But, while a study of the principles of the use made of their own lacquer by the Japanese cannot fail to be suggestive in the highest degree, it is not desirable that their designs should merely be copied. We have our birds and flowers and landscape, our own subjects to be derived from work in the fields or even in the factory, our own histories and romances, far too neglected as motives for decorative work. If Mr. Koizumi's treatise will induce some of his readers to use, in these directions, the methods he describes so clearly and from so practical a point of view, he will have rendered a considerable service to the industrial arts of this country.

EDWARD F. STRANGE.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE



THE romantic popularity of lacquer work in the world of house furnishing during the last ten or fifteen years affords in itself a very interesting study of human psychology. The charming effect of the decoration and the most attractive quality of old lacquer enchanted people who were getting tired of the plainness of gloomy oak and tame mahogany; the infectious search for old lacquer was responded to with the ready assistance of the trade, and in a very short time the vogue became almost a craze, and an imperative item in house furnishing and decoration.

The dominating influence, which was wide and deep, found its way practically into every sphere of human activity. It was good as far as the interests of the general public were concerned, but, from the point of view of the art of lacquering, it has brought a destructive effect with it.

While the fashion was limited to collecting old lacquer and the reproduction of a high quality of work, it was quite legitimate and deserving of merit, but, as a matter of course, the trade of modern civilization does not rest until it kills quality by mass production and low prices, a process which naturally encourages an unhealthy appetite.

So the standard of lacquer was shamefully lowered, and there followed a period of commonplace work; but such a storm of mad fashion does not last very long, and there seem to be signs that the disturbance is now shifting toward the Colonies and other new worlds, leaving us to repair the damage that was done.

The vogue for lacquer in Europe is really a revival of one which flourished in the eighteenth century for a considerable period. At the time this new industrial art developed in quite an admirable degree, and made a deep impression on design and decoration in all fields of art and crafts, especially in furniture. The famous designer and cabinet maker, Chippendale, has shown with great



Japan is now the subject nation—trying to catch up the pace. But you will not only find in a mass job, but in a state of time and pressure.

It is the feeling is artistically considered, with the whole and the body for the next person, which is the most interesting and attractive part of the work. The article must be quite free from any and all—look over all the corners where remnants of painter's brush generally take refuge.

Once again I would like to emphasize the importance of ground work. When you examine the value of Japan's work, apart from the value of sculpture, the first thing you see is the technical quality of the work, second the artistic value of the decoration, third, the design of the article. By these three tests the value of Japan's work is found. A fault in any one of them means the failure of the whole.

It may be of some interest to consider how these three points found in the history of Japanese Japan. As stated previously, the origin of the present property of Japan must have been known to remote ages in Japan and gradually, from more modern, developed into decorative purposes with the progress of civilization. As a natural cause in the progress of an industry, the division of labor was also instituted in the Japanese industry via, however, Japanese character. Since then they have made their independent progress or swayed under the influence of the law of supply and demand. Until the latter part of the seventeenth century the technical quality of applied Japan cannot be very highly appraised, but the design and decoration were of a quite superior standard. In a characteristic way, simple and conventional, it has attained present beauty and classic dignity. The period from the latter part of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century was the time in which the art of packaging reached its highest maturity; rich, elaborate technique, luxurious choice of materials and design—all these so brilliantly developed, some might call it "baroque". However, its standard has never been surpassed and is not likely to be in the future.

Since then technique has made notable progress, but artistically,

it is from a few exceptional Japan that have been on the shelves. But on the way to be reached by contact with modern scientific method and conventionalism.

The rather curious aspect may be explained by the fact that in the various periods Japan was chiefly applied to articles which were used at the Imperial Court by a certain number of people, gradually appreciated, and with the passage of time, gradually became common property, but it was still regarded as an article of luxury in the seventeenth century.

With the opening of the Tokugawa era in A.D. 1603, the tranquility of the island state of the country turned the minds of the people to luxury and refinement, which gave new opportunities to artists and Japan was one of the fields opened for their operations. Eminent artists of the time took the lead, and various schools which were responsible for bringing forth "the great masters" of the eighteenth century were founded, so that of this remarkable development it might be said that it was a direct inspiration of artists of the late seventeenth century.

The rapidly increased popular demand naturally forced an unduly output as the industry gradually passed from artist to artisan, and finally to factory hands, to meet a large demand that arose.

A corresponding study of the above facts will afford an interesting insight into psychological activity and results which the reader can perceive for himself if he visits the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Thus he will find a wonderful collection of Japanese objects, exhibited in a thoroughly systematic way. The world is today poor in such exhibitions though the want of proper quarters certainly vitiates attention.



skill and ingenuity a method of harmonious adaptation of Oriental ideas to English furniture, with both exquisiteness and simplicity.

It appears that many ladies of this period undertook the study of the art of lacquering as an accomplishment, and spent their many leisure hours in this artistic occupation—more modest than most of their modern sisters' exploits. Many specimens of their production are still to be found in varied forms, some of which show a distinct quality and unusual artistic talent.

A vogue may come and go, but quality which is really good always leaves something permanent to retain human interest. The charm of decoration and the refined effect of lacquer in colour schemes cannot be replaced easily by any other plan ; its attractiveness will never fade, though the point of admiration may change or differ, as it is with all other objects of art ; at first, brilliancy and bright colours may attract the young sensorium, but with the evolution of taste the point of attraction will change by steps, viz., technical quality, design, softness of tone, simplicity, and, finally, mystical antiquity.

At present, there is practically no book to help the student to acquire any practical knowledge of the art of lacquering properly, although a volume on *Japanning and Varnishing* was written by Stalker and George Parker in 1688, and Messrs. Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, who are publishing a series of books on arts and crafts, must have felt this important gap before they took the trouble to find me. I am essentially not a writer, especially in a foreign language, and I am afraid that my writing may not give satisfaction to readers, but I have undertaken the task hoping it may lead to more valuable contributions to the art, the fostering of which in the qualified manner is most desirable in this country.

Here I must express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Lt.-Col. E. F. Strange, C.B.E., of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who made my crude material into a more presentable form ; also for the courtesy of Cora, Countess of Strafford, and to the authorities of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who allowed me to illustrate their treasures in this book, to which these illustrations are an invaluable asset.

G. KOIZUMI.

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# LACQUER WORK

## CHAPTER I

### LACQUER



THE term "lacquer" is very freely and widely used in this country, but, when it comes to the point of definition, it is very vague and confusing to most people. It may convey the art of varnishing on polished metallic surfaces to get the effect of gold, or to protect it from tarnishing, while some will think of the Oriental lacquer ware of an entirely different nature. Some will call anything lacquer if it is a painted article decorated with Oriental subjects in gold.

"Lacquer" has, with some prominence, for more than three centuries been associated with the West, yet neither dictionaries nor even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* greatly help us to get a clear understanding of the term. However, it is evident, according to information I have gathered, that the term "lacquer" originally came from the East Indies. In India, there is a varnish which is universally used on household articles of every description, wood or metal. This varnish is known as "lacquer" or "lacker"—no doubt the term was derived from "resin lac," which is the base of the varnish. This was introduced into Europe, and the name still remains in the native term "lacquer" when it is applied to metal; but when used on wood it is commonly known as "polish" or "French polish," the evolution of which at present I cannot clearly state. However, it is clear that this varnish "lacquer" preceded Chinese or Japanese "lacquer" (properly named Urushi in Japanese) in making its appearance in Europe. By the time of the latter's appearance, the definition of "lacquer" was already established



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in the minds of the people, and, as both were similar in appearance, they were naturally classed and called under the same term.

The subject which I am going to deal with in this book does not refer to either of the above. It relates to an entirely new production which was invented in Europe in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and which is correctly called European lacquer. An examination reveals the fact that it was an attempt to produce a ware resembling Chinese or Japanese "lacquer," by using Indian material "lac." The above explains the confusion, but added to this already intermixed nature of the term, there has been a big move of retrogression by mass producers of to-day who use ordinary paint instead of "lacquer." There was also another attempt in this respect known under the term of "papier maché."

I hope the above has thrown a clear light on an entangled subject, but we still need more clear knowledge to satisfy our enquiring minds as to the difference between "Indian lacquer" and "Chinese and Japanese lacquer."

"Resin lac," which is the base of Indian lacquer, is an incrustation formed on the twigs or young branches of various trees by insects called "Coccus lacca," e.g. in India. When this has been through various processes and made into a form of thin flakes, it is known as "shellac" which is the commonest of all its various names, viz., stick lac, seed lac, button lac, white lac, etc., and this "resin lac" is dissolved in methylated spirits, sometimes with the addition of one or more other resins or gums, and is known here as French polish.

Chinese or Japanese lacquer (or, in its proper Japanese name, Urushi) is the exudation of a special tree called Urushi-No-Ki. The sap is obtained by making incisions in the bark of the tree, in a similar manner to that by which rubber is obtained—it is really a ready-made natural varnish, though it needs some process of refining before it is ready for use. One of the peculiar properties of Urushi is that it does not dry in dry heat, but hardens in about four hours if it is placed in a damp atmosphere with a temperature of about 70° F., and once it dries, acids, alcohol, alkali, or any such caustics will make no impression on it; also it will stand heat well

up to about 160° C. This unique property gives it a great advantage over any other varnish or coating material—at the same time, it involves a very complicated and delicate technique to handle it properly, and demands years of experience. This is one of the reasons that prevent Urushi ware from being produced in Europe; also, for most people here, it would be difficult to appreciate the value of it as compared to the cost of production, nor would there be enough encouragement for the artists, who have to take endless pains with minute care to achieve any good result.

Urushi work is no doubt one of the oldest and most highly developed industrial arts in the world—it is possible that the usefulness of its properties were known to the people of quite primitive ages in China and Japan, and, to-day, the scope of its application and the use of it are very widely branched off into various directions, any one of which requires special training of considerable duration.

The study of such a subject as this in a thorough and systematic manner would be most interesting and valuable, but it would not be an easy undertaking. At the same time, such a study would not help those whose object is to get "work done," especially in the West; since this little book is intended for them, I shall only deal with European or English lacquer, which, though it may lack the quality of Urushi, is much more suited for the object and purpose of its use in the West, and it would not be very difficult for anyone with an artistic hand to turn his or her leisure time to useful and interesting purposes, or even to take it up for a profession which would gain considerable success, according to the merit it shows.

The European lacquer artists, according to records and the specimens of their work that I can see to-day, only made attempts to copy, chiefly, one of the simplest branches of Chinese-Japanese lacquer work, viz., gold and silver decoration on a ground of lacquer of various colours, also a very little of the Coromandel style, but no Togidashi, Chinkinburi, Zokokunuri, Zogannuri, or gold lacquer of Japan, etc.

Besides the above-mentioned, there was another attempt, as I mentioned before, known as "papier maché." This is entirely different in its process and material. The foundation is moulded into various



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If the following is satisfactorily considered, with the article and the study for the next person, which is the most interesting and attractive part of the work. The article must be given time from any one and get—look over all the corners where remnants of human power generally take refuge.

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It may be of some interest to consider how these three points found in the history of Japanese lacquer. As stated previously, the quality of the lacquer work of Japan has been known in remote ages in Japan and gradually, from some usefulness, developed into decorative purposes with the progress of civilization. As a natural cause in the progress of an industry, the division of labor was also instituted in the lacquer industry, viz., designer, lacquer, decorator. Since then they have made their independent progress or ways under the influence of the law of supply and demand. Until the latter part of the seventeenth century the technical quality of applied lacquer cannot be very highly appreciated, but the design and decoration were of a quite superior standard. In a characteristic way, simple and conventional, it has attained graceful beauty and classic dignity. The period from the latter part of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century was the time in which the art of lacquering reached its highest maturity: with superior technique, brilliant designs of decoration and design—then an extremely developed, some critics might call it "overdone." However, its standard has never been surpassed and is not likely to be in the future.

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The rapidly increased popular demand naturally forced an industry output, so the industry gradually passed from artistic to artisan and finally to factory hands to meet a huge demand for lacquer.

A corresponding study of the above facts will afford an interesting insight into psychological activity and results which the reader can picture for himself. He will find the Victorian and Albert Museum, London. There he will find a wonderful collection of Japanese lacquer, exhibited in a thoroughly systematic way. The words "lacquer" from an such exhibition, though the word is lacquer, does not certainly attract attention.



articles with mashed paper or pulp. This is then Japanned. The chief constituent of the varnish that is used in this process is asphalt, and it is dried in a heat of about 300° F. ; therefore, it is more patient of heat and wear than is lacquer, but it is wanting in the mellow effect which is the charming feature of lacquer or Urushi. Decoration on this ware was mostly executed by a system of transfers, and shapes were moulded mechanically ; its strong expression of mechanism could be tolerated only when compensated by absolute usefulness. If this ware is to be reborn, the place should be Birmingham, under the smoke and amid the roar of rushing machines.

The foregoing study shows the term "lacquer" has been in use in a very exaggerated manner, but for the sake of convenience, and to avoid further complexity, I will refer in the following treatment as to European, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and metal lacquer.

## CHAPTER II GROUND WORK

### 1. *Materials Needed for the Ground Work*

(It would be better to gather together all the materials we need at the beginning of each different stage as we proceed in the process.)

#### (a) LACQUER

(Hereafter in this treatise European lacquer will be referred to simply as lacquer.)



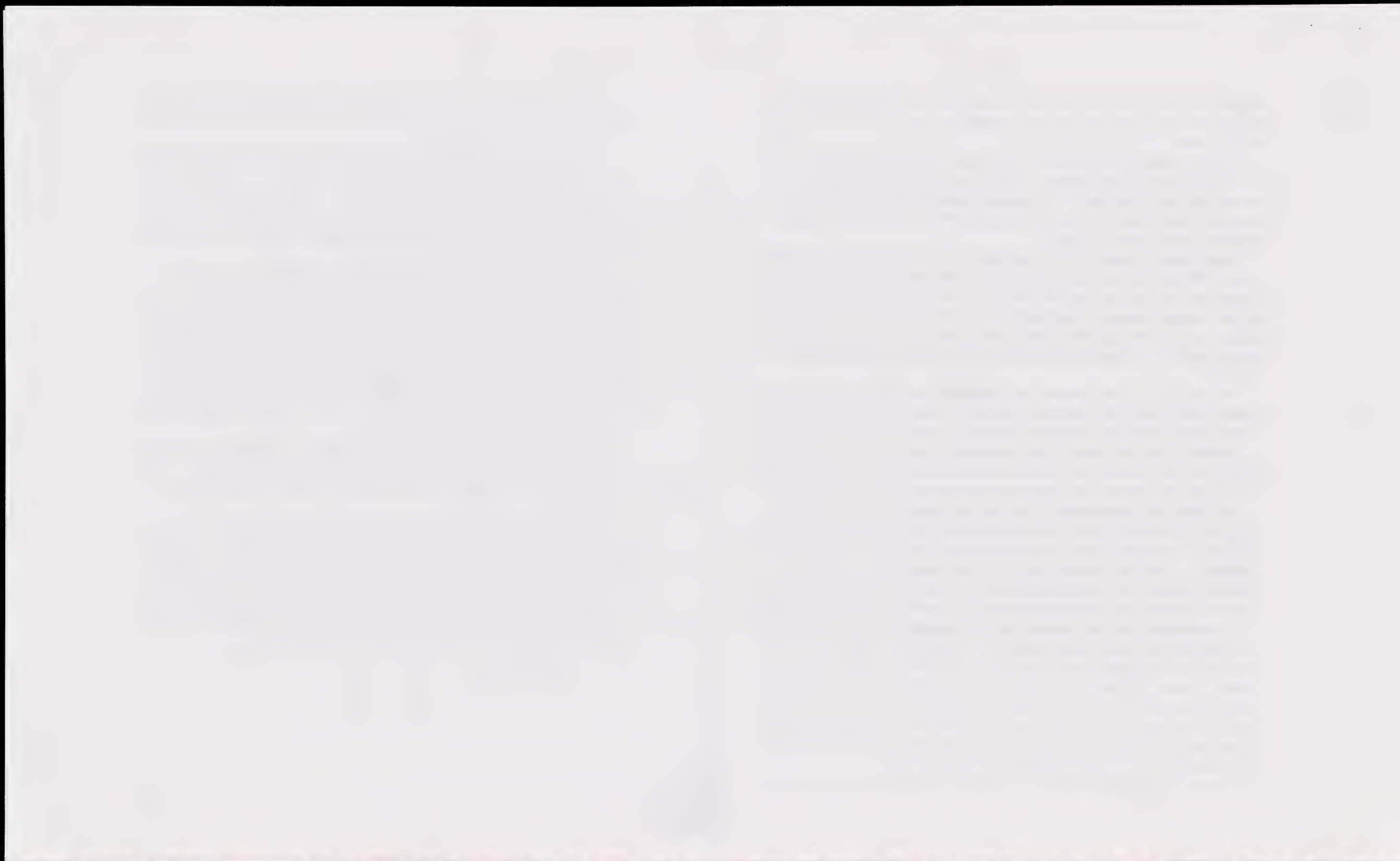
HERE are various ingredients in making lacquer, each of which is proclaimed to be better than any other—some are kept in the secret chambers of "the world of wonders"—but here, I will give you the whole benefit of my patent lacquer No. 18,257, 1912.

It is made with 2½ lbs. of resin lac dissolved into one gallon of "methylated industrial spirits," but, for white or colourless lacquer, the lac should be bleached first, the process of which would not be worth our going into detail, as it can be had ready made ; it is known as "white or bleached lac." In this case, the quantity should be 5 lbs. of white lac to 1 gall. of spirits.

In dissolving, it should be stirred frequently ; otherwise, the lac will settle at the bottom of the vessel and form into a gummy mass, which is difficult to disperse. When it is thoroughly dissolved, add ¼ lb. of camphor.

When you buy lac, take care to select the purest, free from dirt and colouring matter—the grades in lac run from common substances which are generally sold at an oil-shop, and are dark brown in colour, to orange and lemon. The last is really clear pale orange in colour, and it is the best, but it is rather difficult to obtain in a small quantity. As was previously stated, there are several forms in which the resin lac is placed on the market, but the one in shell form is the easiest to dissolve.







### (b) METHYLATED SPIRITS

Mineralized methylated spirits, pale violet in colour, which are generally sold at oil shops, may be used, but industrial spirits, colourless and the purest in quality are to be recommended, though they are not easy to obtain without a license, but resin or shellac finish, i.e. small quantity of gum, having been added to the spirit, it is then sold without a license, and may be obtained from a distillery.

### (c) COLOURED LACQUER

Coloured lacquer is made by mixing any desired colour with the lacquer, but the colour should be dry, free from chemical action in contact with spirit, and of fine grain, and permanent colour. The mixture should be ground through a colour-mixing machine, then strained through muslin.

The proportion of the mixture greatly differs according to the nature of the colour, but a sure guide is the thickness of the mixture—it should not be thick enough to leave prominent brush marks as you paint, also, it should not be too “runny,” but should form a body, and yet all brush marks should smooth themselves out as it dries. A little experience will soon teach one to judge the right proportions.

When lacquer is not in use, it should be kept in an air-tight vessel, but, before using it again, it should be well stirred, especially in cases of the heavy colours, such as white lead, emerald green, etc., and also a mixture of a number of colours.

When you buy colour it is very important to test it—it should not change its tint when rubbed between your fingers. Also, notice the effect when it is mixed with lacquer by damping it.

### (d) COLOURS

1. BLACK. Vegetable black should never be used in lacquer work ; it is coarse and lifeless in colour.

Gas black is the best in quality, tint, and grain—it is of a very light substance. If you desire a specially deep, dense tint, after

you have built the body with gas black, paint it over twice with lacquer in which spirit black (stain colour) is dissolved, then twice with clear lacquer and finish it as usual.

One of the most attractive qualities of Japanese lacquer is the effect of its transparency and depth of colour. This you may be able to get pretty near by the last method, with the exception of using walnut stain instead of spirit black, and by applying a greater number of coats. If you mix a small quantity of Indian red into the gas black lacquer in this process, you will get the effect of the brownish antique Chinese lacquer.

2. RED. Vermilion is rather expensive, but the fact of its superior quality in tint and permanency establishes its claim to preference above other cheaper materials. If, however, you are going to use any substitute, do not forget the aforesaid tests, as red is one of the most troublesome colours in lacquer work.

I strongly recommend you to use a single colour as far as possible, but when you are obliged to match yours to other colours, the following colours will give you sufficient variety to meet most cases.

Using vermilion as the base, mix crimson lake or scarlet for a deeper and stronger hue, orange chrome for brightness, and lemon chrome for a lighter tint. For the dull effect, add Indian red, and black for dark subdued colours. The reflection of the white undercoat through the transparent red, and the depth of clear yellowish varnish or lacquer in which satinwood stain is dissolved over the colour, often give a very pleasing effect which you cannot obtain by a mixture of colours.

3. GREEN. Though it depends on one's taste, a dark tint in this colour is more suitable to show up gold decoration than a light one. Yellowish varnish over a blue ground produces a very nice green. Emerald green is a very bright and brilliant colour, but it is very difficult to use ; you must obtain a very finely ground colour, and, as you paint, stir it continuously, as, being a very heavy substance, it will settle at the bottom of the tin.

The shade may be varied by adding blue for a darker and stronger hue, and yellow for a lighter one. For brightness you cannot do better than use emerald.







4. CELESTIAL BLUE. Blue that you find in old lacquer is mostly deep peacock, and it is generally under a cover of yellow varnish which gives a beautiful soft greenish tint, and is very harmonious with old shades of gold and silver decoration. The mixture of blue, white lead, and emerald green will produce this effect, the proportion of which would be best to be decided by a little experiment. There has been an attempt to introduce various hues of this colour as a recent vogue, but celestial blue finds the most permanent root in the field of taste. Strong colours are very effective and charming, when they are used as "touches," but would be too glaring and repelling on a large surface.

5. WHITE AND CREAM. For our purpose only white lead should be used ; zinc white or flake white, etc., would corrode and turn to a pale pink in contact with spirits. The lacquer used for this colour, as has been shown, must be white or transparent ; ordinary lacquer gives a dirty brown tint. A small quantity of yellow will give a soft creamy tint.

6. ORANGE OR YELLOW. Cream lacquer with a coat of yellow varnish over it is often called yellow lacquer. This method certainly produces a very nice clear transparent effect, but it is not an easy matter to get the colour evenly, nor to judge the tint beforehand. You will get varying shades of yellow by a mixture of white lead, and a small weight of chrome No. 1 to No. 4. Red lead is a very bright colour, but after a time, through chemical action, it clogs in lacquer. It may be quite well used immediately after it is made, but it will not keep. For softening the tone add a little walnut stain.

7. TORTOISE-SHELL LACQUER. Tortoise-shell lacquer is an anomaly, but a very effective one, and is made in the following manner—

On a prepared ground of pinky lacquer (a mixture of white lead and Indian red) paint a coat of clear gold size, then black oil colour which is thinned with turpentine, is dabbed on in an irregular manner, leaving spaces for vermilion which is applied in the same manner, effecting an irregular shading to look like the pattern of the real shell. The realistic effect of the shading of the pattern is produced by manœuvring the two colours to run into each other (see Fig. 1).



FIG. 1.—TORTOISE-SHELL LACQUER

(5211)—facing p. 20



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#### (c) UNDERCOATING

The undercoat in lacquer work is a little different from the undercoat of human vanity, it is more like the foundation of a building. Not only is it the life and strength of the lacquer, but the final appearance entirely depends upon the texture of the undercoating. Also, in the end, you will save a large amount of labour and patience by careful treatment of this unassuming foundation.

Take 14 ozs. of gilders' whiting,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. gelatine, and boil in a glue pot with 1 pint of water, occasionally stirring well, until they both melt together into a soupy liquid, when it is ready for use. This only needs warming for subsequent use, but it might be necessary to add a small quantity of water to replace the evaporation.

#### (d) GLASS PAPER

I recommend Oakley's No. 0 and "Flour" for our purpose.

#### (e) PUMICE POWDER

Medium grain and "Flour."

#### (f) VARNISHING BRUSHES

1 in. and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. would be serviceable.

#### (g) THE BASE FOR LACQUERING

Any material may be chosen for the base of lacquering, but as the nature of lacquer itself is hard and brittle, and your aim is good wear, you must choose something quite firm, yet the surface should be strong in adhesion. Polished metallic surfaces, glass, china, etc., are not suitable, nor soft cardboard boxes, book-covers, leather and textile goods, nor anything that requires flexible wear; above all, wood, especially hard wood, is the most suitable base for lacquer work. Further, select wood close grained and well seasoned. If the grain is coarse, it is more trouble to fill up, and, if it is not well seasoned, it is apt to shrink or warp.

Pine and deal are sometimes used for their cheapness, but they are very easily chipped and dented, and offer a very poor surface. Most pieces of antique lacquer are based on oak, though well-seasoned







pine was also used ; oak will give a quite good result if you are prepared to devote much time and labour. Mahogany and walnut are the best for all purposes, especially in large articles, and, although they have not so close a grain as whitewood, they are more reliable in the test of time. For small articles, whitewood and birch may be employed with great advantage for their close grain.

Moreover, from the point of view of utility, it must not be forgotten that lacquer has a weakness against spirits, heat and water, especially hot ; therefore, it is not suitable for trays, cups, tables, flower pots, etc., which are all likely to come into contact with it unless some protective measure is taken.

#### (j) ARTICLES FOR LACQUERING

It is said that the secret of success in dressmaking lies in the power to devise suitable lines and colours according to the client's figure and complexion. The same faculty of observation is also necessary to be exercised before you decide to undertake to lacquer any article. First, you must see if there is enough space in which you can fully express the character and the merit of lacquer decoration ; then see whether the design of the article also is suitable for lacquer decoration. Although it may come outside the scope of a lacquer artist, it is sometimes necessary to consider whether lacquer ornaments would be suitable for a certain room or for the surroundings in which they will be placed.

Apart from this, the field from which you can select is very large ; for instance—cabinets, wardrobes, bookcases, bureaux, chests, tables, chairs, settees, stands, lamp-stands, screens, mirror frames, picture and photo frames, pianos, clock-cases, boxes, stationery outfits, stools, gramophone cases, toilet sets, tea caddies, bag frames, etc., etc. Tables and trays that are intended for tea or wine should, as previously stated, be fitted with glass tops for protection.

#### 2. *The Process of Preparing the Ground*

##### (a) PRIMING

The base should be finished quite smoothly with glass paper, No. 0, and it should be perfectly free from dirt and grease. The article

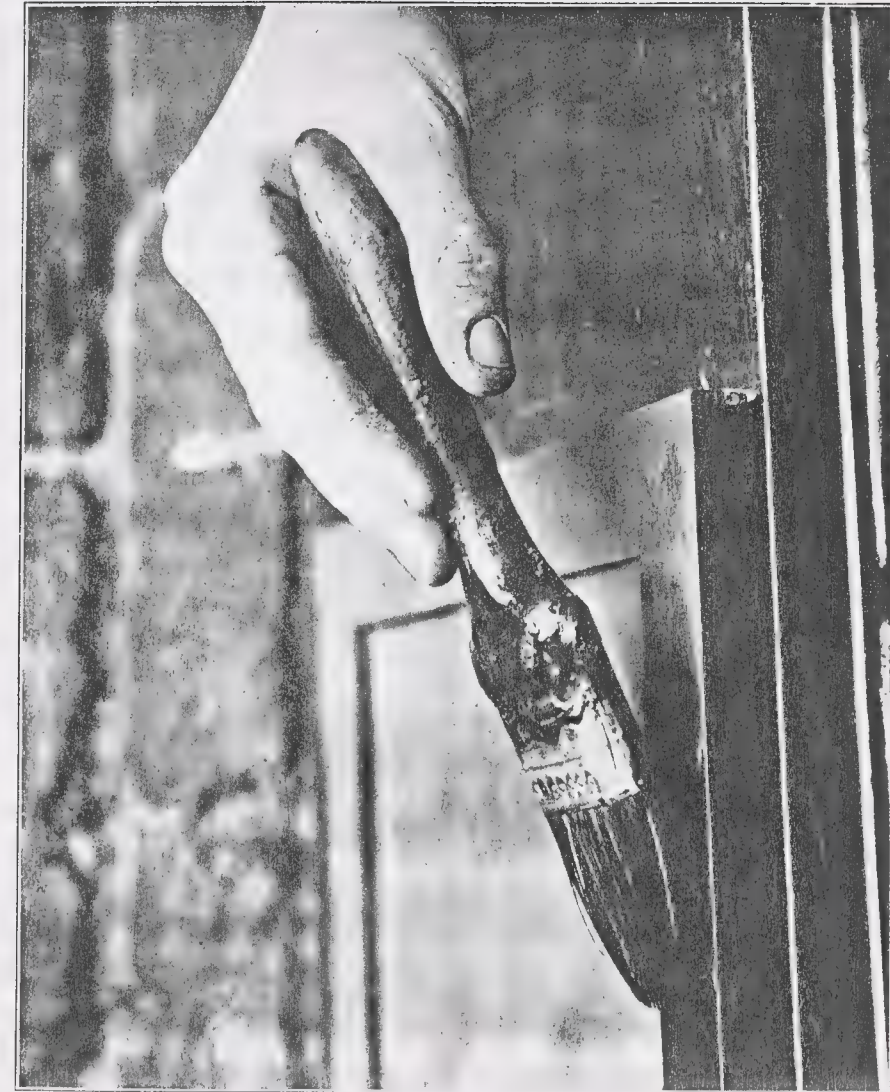


FIG. 2.—SHOWING HOW TO USE THE VARNISHING BRUSH

(5211)—facing p. 22



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should then be primed with a coat of lacquer—use a varnishing brush well soaked in lacquer and in such a manner as to get the lacquer well into the grain and corners, but do not leave any pools or streaks, and smooth it carefully by using a brush almost dry, flat against the surface with a light touch (*see* FIG. 2).

If you are going to use an old polished or painted article it is better to scrape down to the wood unless it is very old and hard, in which case priming may not be necessary, only a good washing with soda.

For a metallic surface it is essential to rub it with glass paper thoroughly, and this process should be followed immediately by priming—lacquer on an oxidized surface is apt to peel off. Glazed china or glass should be “roughed” first with an application of hydrofluoric acid.

#### 4) FILLING

Knots of wood, holes, dents, etc., should be filled with filling, which is made by adding whiting to the undercoating, thus making it into a putty. Use a putty knife as for plastering, then glass paper it when dry.

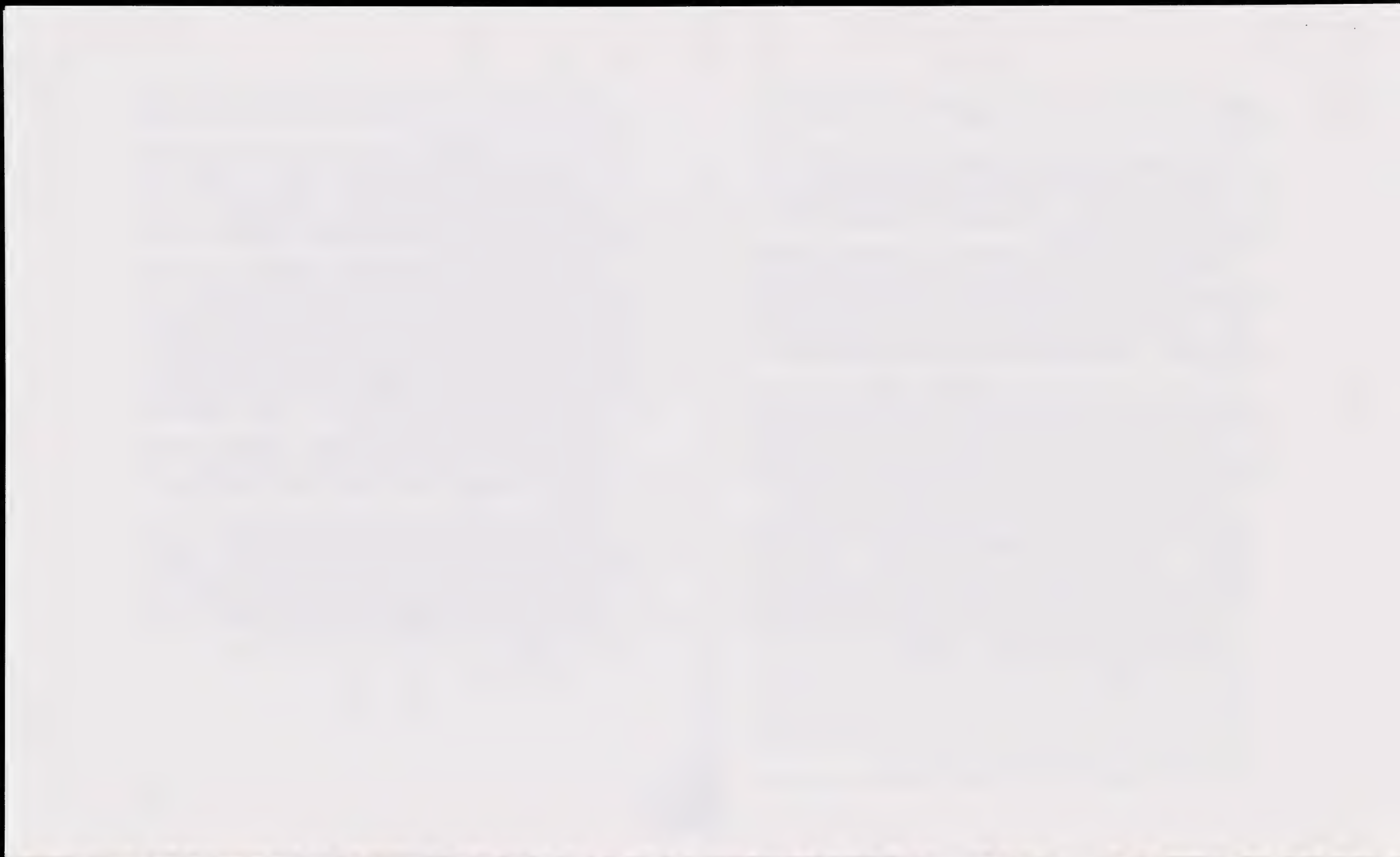
#### 5) UNDERCOATING

When the priming is dry, or the filling completed, the undercoat is applied with a varnishing brush, and exactly the same care should be taken as in the case of priming. If the base is on a coarse-grained wood, use the brush in an aggressive way, and fill the grain with material before you smooth it out. The importance of this primary operation cannot be emphasized too strongly, as all the subsequent processes will entirely depend on this, and it is a serious matter to remedy the faults which are made at this stage.

#### 6) GLASS PAPERING OF THE UNDERCOAT

With No. 0 glass paper, rub the whole surface until you get a perfectly even ground, i.e. free from “waves” or “dents,” and see that the grain is filled. It does not matter if you rub through to the base, especially at the sharp edges, as a thick undercoat is easily chipped by a knock.







Glass paper can be used more economically and conveniently if you cut it into ribbons, about an inch wide, than by using it in an irregular form. Use it until it loses its "cut," which you can detect by the fact that the surface begins to show a polish as you rub it.

Rubbing with the fingers is apt to result in a "wavy" surface and round edges, but, if you use a square block of wood with the glass paper rolled over, you will get a sharp square surface, and this will also save a good deal of labour, especially on a large surface.

From time to time wipe away the dust and examine the result of your effort; also feel if the surface is quite smooth. Often it is difficult to detect faults unless you hold the article in such a way as to get a certain reflection. If there is any dent or hole which you cannot remedy with paper, it should be filled with filling again. When you find the surface is faultless, clean it thoroughly with a dry duster, brushing out all the corners and inlets—leave no trace of superfluous powder or grit, and prepare it for the next process.

The ground work is rather laborious and uninteresting, but it is very important, as the whole life of lacquer work depends upon this foundation. Thoroughness and patience are the only guiding stars to success.

#### (e) LACQUERING THE GROUND

Take a varnishing brush, the size of which differs according to the size of the surface you are going to lacquer. It is best to use the largest you can conveniently manage; dip it right into the coloured lacquer which you have chosen to use, and stir well.

Lay the article flat on a table if it is possible, and paint it quickly, using the brush swiftly and boldly, but not in a splashy manner. Move your hand steadily, first covering the whole surface by strokes from left to right; then smooth out the brush marks before the lacquer starts to set by using the brush crossways to the first. "Runs" on edges should be brushed off after the surface is done. Owing to the quick drying nature of lacquer, no time should be lost in attending to the main object; it is better to leave pools and marks alone if the lacquer starts to set.

If the article is tall, such as a standard, a candlestick, etc., you

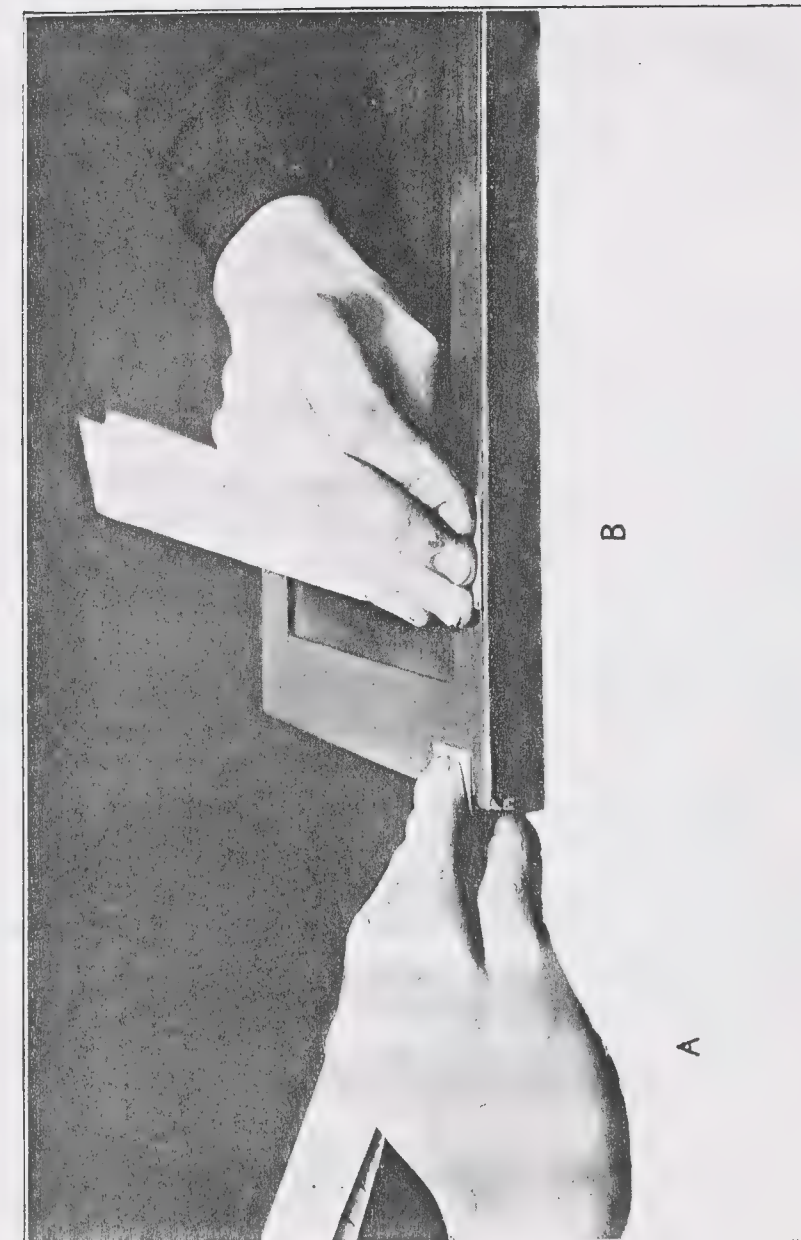
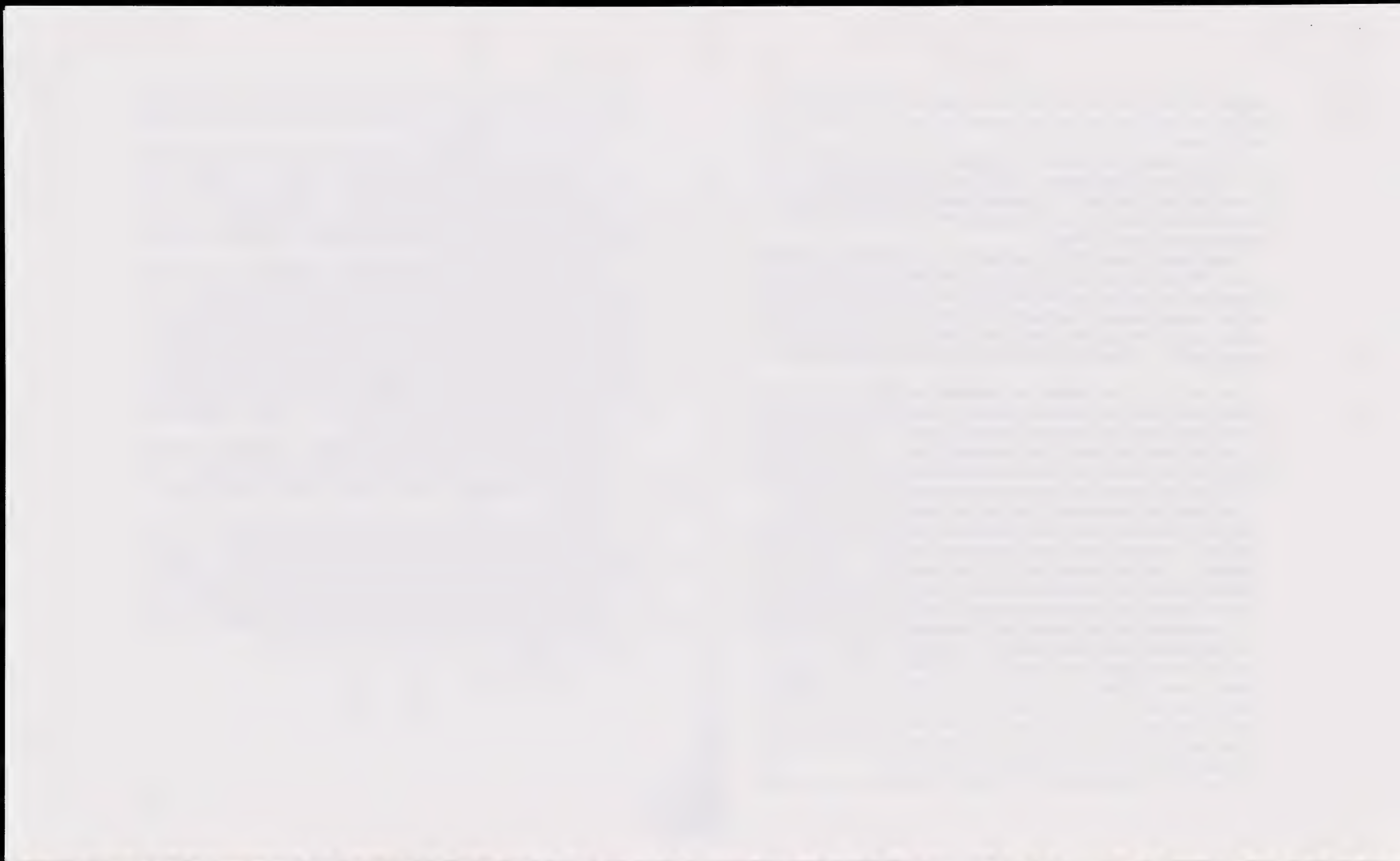


FIG. 3.—A. WRONG WAY. B. RIGHT WAY OF GLASS PAPERING THE LACQUER

(5211)—facing p. 24





had better start operations from the base; you will find great advantage in handling some articles, such as a box or cabinet, etc., from the inside. Repeat the operation at least five times, allowing one to five hours to intervene between the operations, and increase the length of time as you advance in the number of coats. Each coat should be rubbed with No. 0 glass paper so as to remove all pots and any roughness, before you put on a new coat. If you want an especially good quality, paint about ten coats so as to get an ample thickness of body for papering and polishing.

#### GLASS PAPERING AND POLISHING LACQUER

When the lacquer is quite dry, rub down all brush marks and roughness with No. 0 glass paper, then with "Flour" rub out all the marks of No. 0. In this process, a special precaution, which is quite contrary to the papering of undercoating, should be taken. While it is aimed at producing a perfect surface you must remember to keep the thickness of the body as much as you can, and not to lose more of it by rubbing than is necessary; the edges are best left almost untouched, as, in polishing, they are bound to feel the full weight of the force which tends to cut the lacquer through. Use your paper on the edges from the inside (*see* Fig. 3). If you use it from the outside, it is apt to cut the lacquer through to the base, the remedying of which will require considerable trouble.

When the papering is thoroughly carried out, proceed to polish it with a piece of damp cloth dabbed on "medium" pumice powder, rubbing against the surface, not too hard but firmly, with a circular motion, and thus rub out all the papering marks. Finally polish with pumice powder "Flour" in the same manner, but it is advisable to use another cloth. When these operations have been carried out properly, you should have a perfect matt surface without any scratches or paper marks.

Keep watch as you proceed with polishing, by wiping the surface with a clean cloth from time to time, that you do not cut through the lacquer, especially at protruding corners and edges. If you find you have made a blunder do not let it come in contact with water, as it will corrode the undercoating, but apply a few coats of



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lacquer all over the affected section—trying to patch up the particular spot will not only end in a messy job, but is a waste of time and patience.

If the polishing is satisfactorily completed, wash the article and be ready for the next process, which is the most interesting and attractive part of the work. The article must be quite free from any dirt and grit—look over all the corners where remnants of pumice powder generally take refuge.

Once again I would like to emphasize the importance of ground work. When you examine the value of lacquer work, apart from the value of antiquity, the first thing you see is the technical quality of the lacquer, second the artistic value of the decoration, third, the design of the article. By these three tests the value of lacquer really stands. A fault in any one of them means the failure of the whole.

It may be of some interest to consider how these three points fared in the history of Japanese lacquer. As stated previously, the utility of the peculiar property of lacquer must have been known in remote ages in Japan, and gradually, from mere usefulness, developed into decorative purposes with the progress of civilization. As a natural cause in the progress of an industry, the division of labour was also instituted in the lacquer industry, viz., designer, lacquerer, decorator. Since then they have made their independent progress or swayed under the influence of the law of supply and demand. Until the latter part of the seventeenth century the technical quality of applied lacquer cannot be very highly appraised, but the design and decorations were of a quite superior standard. In a characteristic way, simple and conventional, it has attained graceful beauty and classic dignity. The period, from the latter part of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century was the time in which the art of lacquering reached its highest maturity; rich, exquisite technique, luxurious elegance of decoration and design—all three so brilliantly developed, some critics might call it "overdone." However, its standard has never been surpassed, and is not likely to be in the future.

Since then technique has made notable progress, but artistically,

apart from a few exceptions, lacquer work has been on the downhill road, on the way to be crushed by contact with modern scientific civilization and commercialism.

This rather curious aspect may be explained by the fact that, in the earliest periods, lacquer was chiefly applied to articles which were used at the Imperial Court by a certain number of people specially appointed, and, with the passage of time, gradually became common property, but it was still regarded as an article of luxury in the seventeenth century.

With the opening of the Tokugawa era in A.D. 1600, the tranquillity of the leisured state of the country turned the minds of the people to luxury and refinement, which gave new opportunities to artists, and lacquer was one of the fields opened for their operations. Foremost artists of the time took the lead, and various schools which were responsible for bringing forth "the grand maturity" in the eighteenth century were founded; so that of this remarkable development it might be said that it was a direct inspiration of artists of the late seventeenth century.

The rapidly increased popular demand naturally forced an unhealthy output, so the industry gradually passed from artists to artisans, and finally to factory hands, to meet a large demand from abroad.

A corresponding study of the above facts will afford an interesting insight into psychological activity and results, which the reader can perceive for himself if he visits the Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington. There he will find a wonderful collection of Japanese lacquer, exhibited in a thoroughly systematic way. The world to-day poor in such exhibitions, though the merit of lacquer deserves certainly wider attention.



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### CHAPTER III DECORATION

E are now in the second stage to which our project belongs. Here every opportunity is afforded to individual gift and skill. One may be gifted with fertile imagination and full of inspiration, but to consult and study the work of one who went before us is always a wise man's habit. There are very many examples, both oriental and occidental, from which inspiration may be drawn, or by means of which can be seen the effect of various decorations.

There are two things especially to be noted. The one is that, as we are following the method of European lacquering, we should retain its characteristics in our work. If you examine old work, specially of good quality, you will see the lines are bold, free and graceful, with no trace of timidity or mechanical suggestion. The subjects, though they might be conventional and unnatural in form, are full of life, play and humour; the most charming effect of the whole might be summed up thus—the acting of a clever comedian in mimicry of oriental expressions—and with it appears everything that is used for the stage setting—flowers, trees, grass, birds, animals, etc. They are also affected by the spirit of the artist.

This characteristic appealed greatly to occidental sentiment, especially to the English; therefore, European lacquer without this would be lifeless. The true copy of oriental decoration, which is so traditional and symbolical, would be of little or no interest to those who understand them little or not at all. The Victoria and Albert Museum has a few good examples of European lacquer in its furniture department.

The second is that you should never copy modern work, which is mostly hideously mechanical or commercial, at its best, and much too timid to serve as a model. There is nothing to inspire human

interest except that it is a sorrowful example of the effect of modern civilization upon an art. Such comment might arouse a heated argument, but art is, like religion, a subject which cannot be settled by disputatious methods. It entirely depends on the quality of the sensibility and intuition which act as an index to the soul.

#### 1. *Material Needed for Decoration*

##### CHALK

It is advisable to have it of fine grade and with a sharp point.

##### RAISING MATERIAL

This is made of exactly the same material as the undercoating, except the proportions, which are as follows—

$\frac{3}{4}$  oz. of Gelatine.

18 ozs. of Gilders' Whiting.

1 pint of Water.

This should be boiled much longer than the undercoating, and it is better if it is prepared a day before it is to be used. The liquid should be thick enough to form a dome as it is dropped from the end of a brush, but it must not be so thick as to be sticky and difficult in "feeding." While it is hot it should be strained through a double muslin bag and kept under a cover. As you warm it for use add a small quantity of water, but be careful not to make it too thin.

##### BRUSHES

4 Long-hair Sable : I recommend Messrs. Rowney's No. 1 and No. 2.

2 Flat, Short-hair Sable : No. 6 and No. 12.

1 Round Wash Brush.

##### GOLD SIZE

Get the best Japan gold size. It should not dry too quickly, but should take at least two hours before it dries.

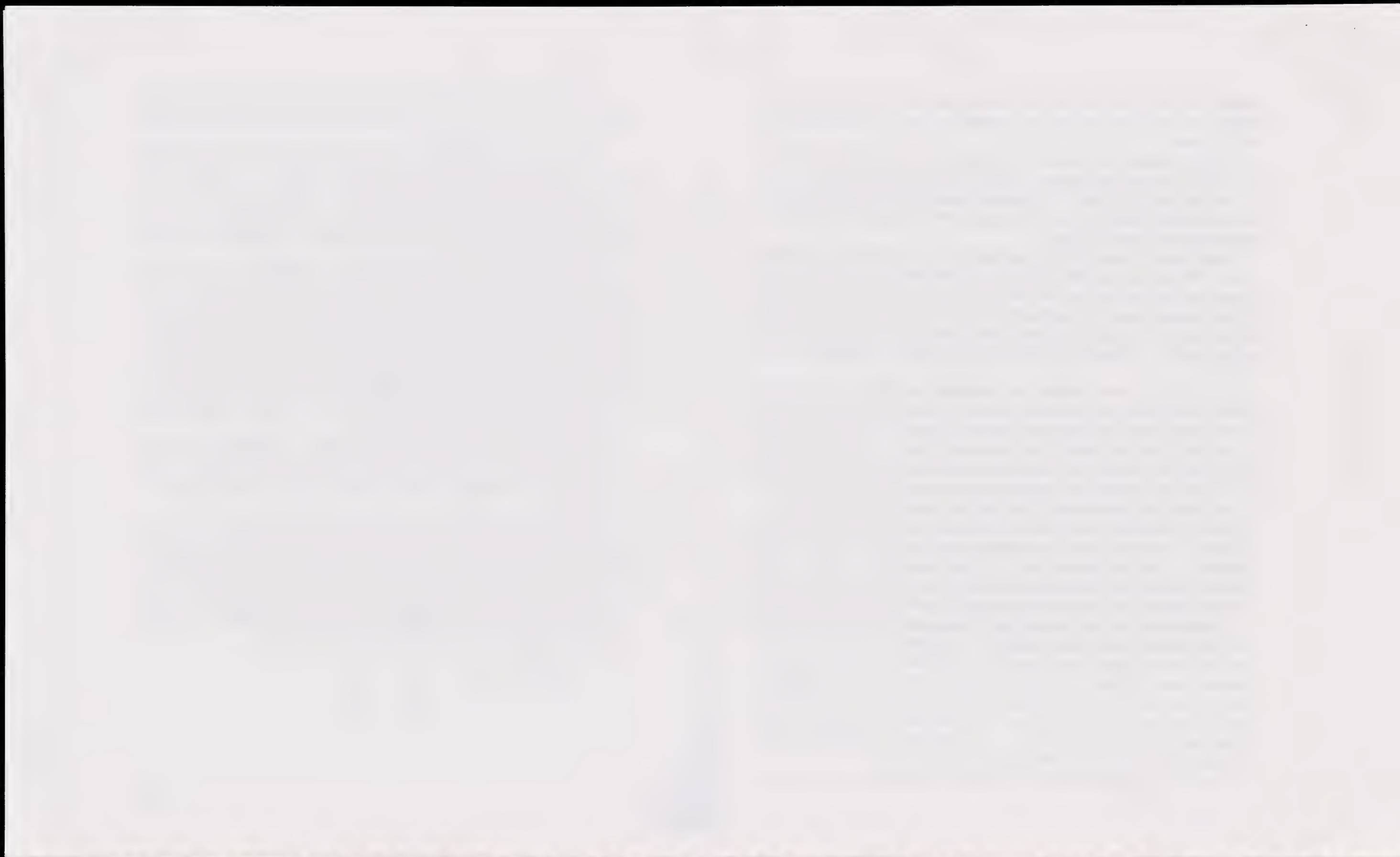
##### OIL COLOURS

1 Tube of Indian Red.

1 " Black.

1 " Yellow.





(f) GOLD LEAF

English gold in transfer.  
Lemon „ „

(g) BRONZE POWDERS

Common dark gold.	Copper.
Common light gold.	Grey.
Fine dark gold.	Silver.
Fine light gold.	Flake gold.
Moss green.	Flake silver.

(h) COTTON WOOL

Unbleached but cleaned.

(i) A cake of Chinese ink.

(j) Walnut stain in crystal form.

(k) Turpentine, pure American.

(l) Two brush washers, with lid.

(m) Three small saucers.

2. *The Process of Decoration*

(a) THE COMPOSITION AND SUBJECTS OF DECORATION

The choosing of the subject and the composition for the decoration of an article depends on one's taste, although it is necessary to follow a principle to keep to the character of lacquer. If you examine specimens of old work the chief feature is the strong influence of Chinese decorative art. The subject generally appears as if it were copied partly from the scene of a palace garden, which is a very popular subject in Chinese lacquer decoration, i.e. a pavilion on the side of an artificial lake; and a garden with a summer-house, temple, bridge, etc., where court ladies and gentlemen are seen in various occupations—dancing, idling, gossiping, sport, etc. A fancy boat or a long-necked swan might make an appearance on the water under a plant which is blooming in a rocky garden; a pair of birds are enjoying their quiet felicity. As a back view, a temple on a rocky island or a distant mountain, birds in flight, etc., enhance the effect. The whole of this is generally panelled within a border of a conventional or diaper pattern. The sides, the inside, or any



(5.211)—facing p. 30

FIG. 4.—A STUDY OF DESIGN IN CHALK



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

PHILOSOPHY 101

LECTURE NOTES

PROF. J. L. GORDON

SPRING 2004

LECTURE 1

THE PHILOSOPHY OF

LANGUAGE

LECTURE 2

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LANGUAGE

LECTURE 3

THE PHILOSOPHY OF

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LECTURE 4

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LECTURE 5

THE PHILOSOPHY OF

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LECTURE 6

tion which is not an important part of the article, can be treated in a more simple way, viz., a bush of flowering plants, a spray of conventional flowers, a figure under a tree, etc., within single or double lines.

In deciding the composition, you must consider first the effect according to the size and the purpose of the article, i.e. it would be a failure if you put a fine detailed decoration on a large piece of furniture, such as a screen, wardrobe, panels for walls, etc. The opposite applies to smaller articles such as stationery outfits, toilet sets, etc.

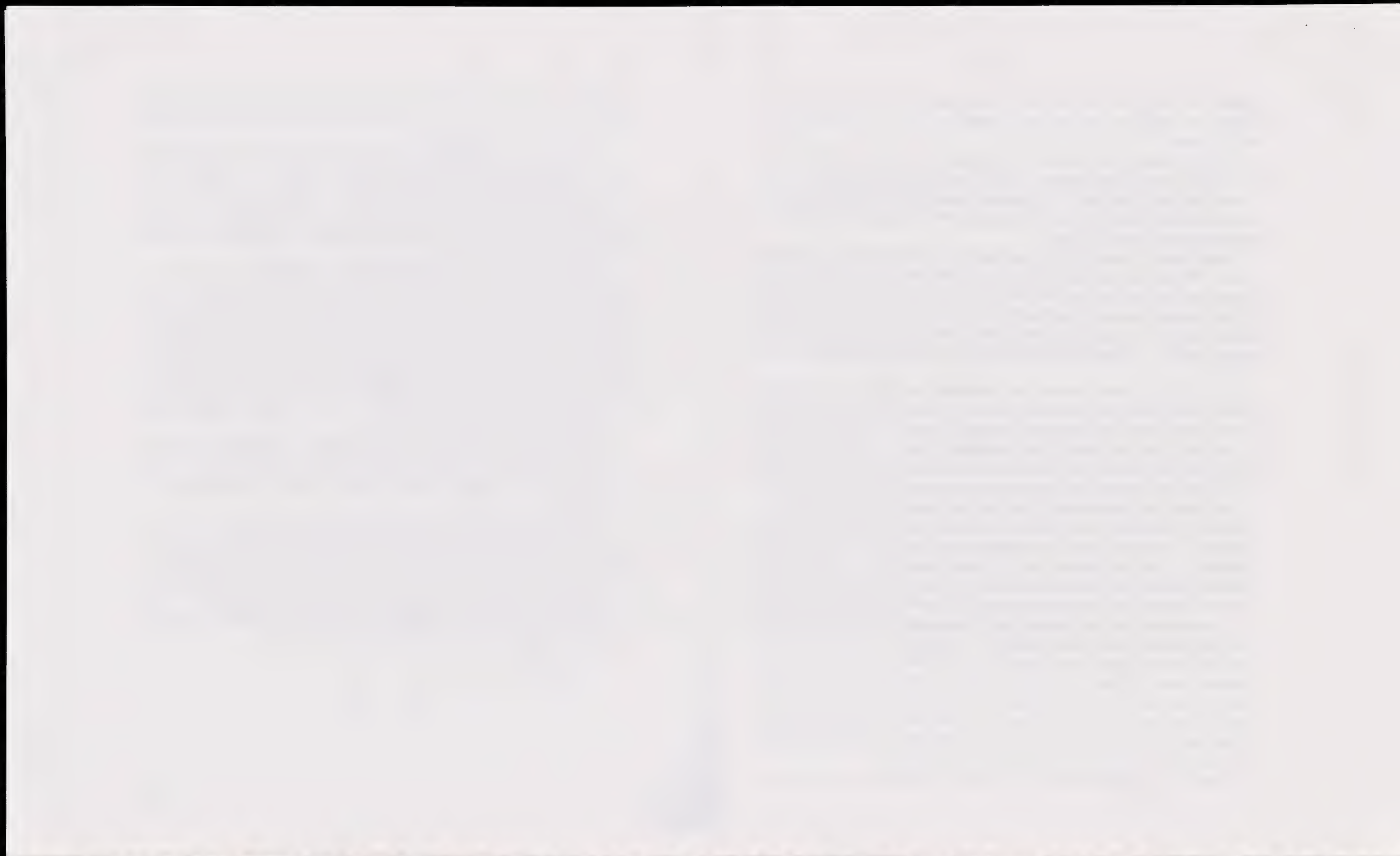
There are a number of people who are fond of the wallpaper effect, a decoration which fills up all the space. It might suit some purposes, but it would soon tire both eyes and mind. Let the work be in right proportions, to fit into the space without any effect of "strap-hanging." In a landscape scene introduce an effect of the infinity of the sphere and sky.

If you are going to decorate a surface which is to be an elevation, you make your composition let it stand as it will be in use—on the floor, on a table, or mantelpiece, etc., as a wrong perspective results in a most ridiculous effect.

Second, according to constructional design, the treatment of heavy repeated mouldings needs careful consideration; in all cases decorations that present a heavy appearance should be avoided. If it is a wide moulding, let the middle be a conventional form of flower or scroll, framed in a diaper pattern to form the shape of metal fittings at the end, but, if there are narrow repeated mouldings, then each, if they are not very crowded, or if they are close together and alternate, should all have different light and simple patterns. In the border no decoration should be in conflict with the main decoration.

In China, the design is marked out with a sharp needle upon lacquer; Japanese use a sheet of paper on which the design is drawn with heated lacquer, which is then used to transfer it to the surface, but I find that sharply pointed chalk is more serviceable in our work. Trace out all proposed decoration on the lacquer with chalk, and study the effect from all the points mentioned above until you are satisfied (*see* FIG. 4).





### (b) RAISED DECORATION

Raising is certainly more trouble, but it is worth it for its rich effect, and a certain decorative character. Sometimes one sees decorations raised indiscriminately, such may be rich in effect, but they end in merely satisfying a childish fantasy. The aim, you must remember, is to relieve the plain flatness of the effect into rich variation, also to effect some depth of perspective. Therefore, the places you should raise are the foremost portion of the main subject in the foreground, viz., the head, hands, and the upper garments of a figure, roofs and pillars of a building, the body and one wing of a bird, the body and two legs of an animal, rocks, trunks of trees and portions of flowers and leaves, alternate leaves and flowers of a plant, etc. Never raise subjects that are intended for distance or the background.

When you have decided what parts you are going to raise lay the article flat on a table, so as to get the surface on which you are going to have the raising quite level, and take the warm raising material (*see* p. 29) and a No. 2 long-hair sable brush. Having fully charged your brush with raising material, quickly carry it to the spot and first carefully mark off the outline of the portion that is to be raised (*see* FIG. 5), then fill the whole space with the material until it forms a full even dome (*see* FIG. 6). (Care should be taken that adjoining raisings are not allowed to run into each other.) This should then be left without being disturbed until it dries, but, if you particularly desire to finish the raising on the other side of the article, you may turn it when the material sets. In cold weather it generally sets in about ten minutes, although it somewhat depends on its size, but the utmost care should be taken not to touch the raising.

If the raising shows signs of small air bubbles as it dries it indicates that there is air in the material, and that it needs to be left without stirring for about an hour.

When the raising curls up at the edges as it dries it is a sign that too much gelatine has been used ; in this case add more whiting and water. When there is not enough gelatine, the raising will be soft and absorbent.

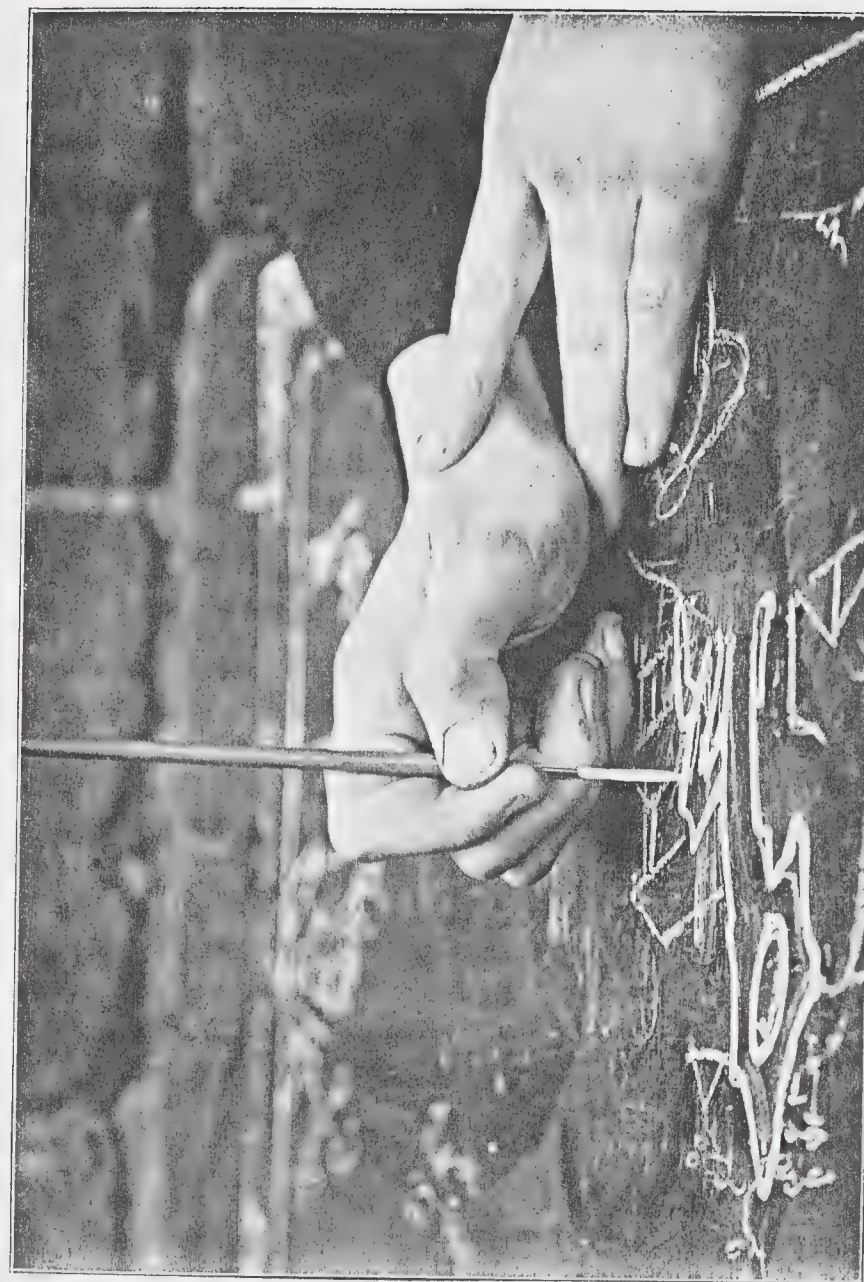


FIG. 5.—THE FIRST STEP OF RAISING A DECORATION

(5211)—facing p. 32



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OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND  
VOLUME 10  
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In the case of a mistake or an accident wipe off the portion together and start anew.

When the raising is thoroughly dry, smooth it gently with glass-paper "flour," and if you desire, you can now do the shaping with the aid of a knife or chisel ; then polish it with the palm of your hand and a dry, soft cloth, after which finish it with a coat of lacquer.

#### TINTS OF COLOUR IN THE DECORATION

As you get a variation in the colour of bronze it is hardly necessary to introduce further colour into the decoration, but specks of bright blue on a black ground, dark colours on red, orange red on cream, etc., may be employed with some advantage.

One must not be persuaded to make lacquer look too pretty, by painting all sorts of colours on it. The taste should be kept slightly below rather than the level that appreciates the look of the heavily jewelled life of an over-rich profiteer.

The general rule of the colour scheme is harmonious contrast, and the hue of colours should be more subdued as the dimensions increase. Bright colours used sparingly in their proper place have the value of a jewel.

Bright red may be introduced on the beak of a bird and on part of its wing ; also it may be used on a portion of a garment, sash, collar, middle of flowers, small narrow portions of a building, etc., but on a red ground use black or dark brown instead.

Corner decorations or leaf decoration on a cream ground may be carried out in light red, on blue and green grounds in dark red.

The above colours are in lacquer, and are applied with a No. 2 long-hair sable, before you proceed to decorate in gold.

#### (1) METALLIC DECORATION

The chief feature of lacquer decoration is that it is mostly carried out in metallic material, and its characteristic effect and beauty lie in its mellow lustre : it is distinctively metallic, yet it has not the hardness of solid metal.

In Japanese lacquer, except for cheap goods which are mostly manufactured for export, only real gold and silver are used. The



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grade runs from very fine dust to coarse filling, and the tints from pale lemon to a warm orange. Gold leaf and bronze powder have never been used, in fact bronze powder has no resistance against the action of the acid which is contained in Urushi (Japanese lacquer), but often a thin sheet of gold and silver was used as an auxiliary.

In European lacquer, often only gold leaf was used, but it has been a general practice to make a combined use of bronze powder. I do not think real gold powder was ever used in Europe for the purpose, but under a protective coat of lacquer or varnish the bronze powder has kept in very good condition in spite of two centuries of existence.

The method of using the metallic powder or gold leaf is quite simple in technique. Take a small quantity of gold size in a small saucer, and mix it with a little squeeze of oil colour. Indian red should be used for the ground of all colours, except red, for which black or yellow should be used. The object of making this mixture is to make the gold size more visible as you draw fine lines; otherwise gold size, owing to its transparent nature, is difficult to see clearly on a polished surface. Besides this, Indian red has an enriching effect on gold. Now let No. 1 or No. 2 long-hair sable brush hold this mixture fully, but not so much as to get a dripping end. The end must always be kept very sharp, as illustrated, and every time you refeed it wipe it against the edge of a saucer to take off the overflow of the mixture. With this the decorations are drawn according to the description that will follow. As you proceed with the drawing you will find from time to time the brush gets sticky and refuses to draw a fine line—this is caused by the gold size drying outside the brush or in the saucer. Wash the brush in turpentine, and also add a little drop of the turpentine to the mixture and stir. You must be very careful not to make the gold size too thin, as it will then lose the power of adhesiveness.

When the gold size is sufficiently dry but is slightly tacky to the touch, rub it over gently with a small piece of cotton wool dabbed in bronze powder, which should then cover the surface richly and smoothly. But, if the cotton wool jealously sticks to the gold size, this means it is not yet ready for bronzing; but, if it has been left



FIG. 6.—THE SECOND STEP OF RAISING A DECORATION

(5211)—facing p. 34



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too long or there is too much turpentine in the gold size, it will not take enough covering. The remedying of this is one of the most troublesome tasks in lacquer work. Wash off the overlooked portion with cotton wool dipped in turpentine, using the utmost care so that the part shall be entirely free from any trace of turpentine or gold size when you finish the cleaning, and also will not affect the adjoining decoration. The slightest trace of turpentine is enough to cause the bronze to smudge, which is very noticeable in the finish and is very disheartening. The cotton wool should be rubbed against a table or paper before it is used to get all the loose ends of the fibre clogged together.

The common bronze powder which is largely used in lacquer work has more metallic lustre than the very fine grain, but the latter is more covering, and has more body when you want to make gold paint.

For gold leaf let the gold size dry slightly harder than that for the powder, and press the leaf gently with your fingers from the back of the paper against the size, but on the edges of raisings or inlets the end of a hard brush.

In laying the leaf be thorough and persistent to get a clean transfer; do not lift off the transfer until you see that all the objects under it are thoroughly covered.

In places such as borders, corners, and the insides of drawers, or interior of cabinets, etc., which do not require decoration of any distinctive character, yet need to have the effect of the plain hardness of a flake, flake is very useful, as it is not only easy to apply but produces the most desirable characteristic effect of softness. To apply the flake, first paint the surface with gold size thickly and evenly; if a warm effect is desired add to it Indian red in oil, or for brightness vermilion, and follow it immediately with a sprinkling of flake. The operation is much simplified if you use a "sprinkling tube," such a tube may be devised in the following simple manner. Make a tube  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. to  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. in diameter by rolling up a sheet of stiff paper and pasting the end firmly, then stretch and fasten a piece of muslin on one end and slope the other as illustrated (see Fig. 7, p. 36). The tube is then fed with flake from the sloped end, this is then gently tapped over the sized surface, to "snow" the flakes; naturally the texture



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of the material used on the tube decides the size of the grain of the flake which sifts through. When the gold size dries, paint over it one or two coats of lacquer, then finish by glass papering and polishing. Should it be part of a decoration, such as corners, borders, etc., only use a coat of lacquer and finish altogether when doing the other parts. Sometimes ordinary coarse bronze powder is used in the place of flake with a much softer effect, in this case a handful of cotton wool which is dabbed in the bronze powder is gently tapped over the sized surface; the irregular spray of cloud formed by this method is quite effective for the inside of china cabinets, drawers, etc.

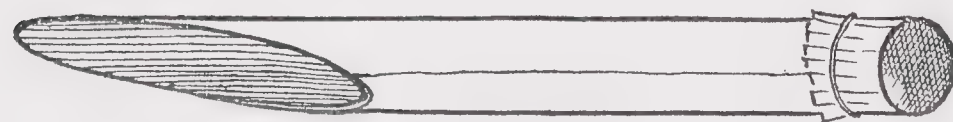


FIG 7.—SPRINKLING TUBE

#### (e) THE ORDER OF THE DECORATION

1. BORDER. It is quite a personal matter in what order the decoration is carried out, but I should advise anyone to start from the border, since the decoration has to be fitted into a certain given space, and it will enable you to perceive the effect of the main decoration more clearly as you proceed.

The borders, as I said before, chiefly consist of straight lines and diaper patterns. Drawing a perfectly straight line would appear to be a perfectly easy matter, but actually it is a most difficult task and needs a considerable amount of practice.

To illustrate this fact, I would refer to the well-known Japanese story: A distinguished artist, pointing to a large stone in his garden, which was in course of reconstruction, said one day in jest to one of his wrestler friends who was well known for his strength, "I have heard of your great strength, but it would be beyond you to move that stone to the other side of the lake for me." The wrestler then asked what the artist would do if his challenge were accepted. The artist said he would display greater strength than the wrestler could show. The challenge was accepted, and the feat was accomplished to the great astonishment of the artist. The artist then



FIG. 8.—THE EDGE OF AN ARTICLE IS USED TO STEADY HAND



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promised to fulfil his bargain within a short time, but the pledge was repeatedly postponed, and at the end of six months the wrestler began to feel uneasy about his friend's faithfulness to his bargain, so he demanded that the proof of his effort should be shown. The artist then took him to his studio, which was filled with paper and silk. On each sheet of these was painted an unfinished picture of the most powerful bow, known as "ten thousand man power," strung to the fullest extent. The artist's explanation was, that he intended to make a worthy return for the wrestler's marvellous performance, but that he had not yet been able to draw such a straight powerful line as to show the strength of the bow to his own satisfaction.

Although it is certainly much better to practise drawing lines with a free hand, a little mechanical aid will help to get over the difficulty. Place a ruler quite close to the point where the line is going to be drawn, and steady your hand by a guide which is pressed on the side of the ruler. The guide is made of an old brush handle, pointed at the end like a pencil, and held together with your brush, or a finger may be used instead of the guide (*see Fig. 8*) or edge of an article may be used to steady the hand (*see Fig. 9*).

It is usual to have the inner lines in silver, the outer lines being in dark gold. The inner parts of a diaper pattern are also often in silver, but used sparingly (*see Illustration*).

It is advisable to sow silver first, as it is more inclined to smear on the gold than *vice versa*.

2. GROUND, HILLS AND DISTANT MOUNTAINS. The special character of this method to represent the ground, hills and distant mountains, etc., is the technique of shading. For the distant mountains, clear transparent gold size is used, but for the ground and hills, oil colour burned amber is mixed. For red lacquer, add a little black to it. This is painted on the whole intended surface with No. 12 flat short sable brush, and the bottom end of it should be shaded off with a dry brush, or with the end of your finger to avoid hard dividing lines.

When the surface is dry enough for sowing the powder, take a small quantity of bronze powder on the end of a round wash brush



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and sweep it downward from the top edge, to form the shade thicker at the top. Moss green is a very serviceable one for all colours except on green lacquer, on which copper or grey should be used ; if you want a soft tone, use grey. Often a number of different bronzes are used in an alternate " wave of hills " with an attractive effect—on a large surface it would be specially necessary. This is done by using a piece of thin paper, the edge of which is cut away in the shape of hills. This paper is placed on the desired spot and bronze powder is swept down from the edge of the paper.

3. RAISED AND HEAVY DECORATION. When the ground is thoroughly dry, gold size all raised and massive decorations and lay gold leaf as described previously, use No. 12 and No. 6 short sable brush and spread the size as thin as you can. The outline should be kept carefully sharp according to the design.

4. FINE DETAILS. Finally, proceed with the fine details of the decoration with No. 1 long hair brush, and Indian red gold size, beginning from the top and make a special point to fill in details on the tints of colours you put on at the beginning, as gold on colours always has a distinctly pleasing effect.

Hold your brush almost perpendicularly as you draw fine details, and let your right wrist rest steadily on the left hand which is supported by the end of a finger on the article, or on a stick (*see* Fig. 10). Draw the lines quite freely and boldly, but they must be fine and graceful. Read again the observations I made on the characteristics of European lacquer. You should not despair because you are not able to copy old examples as you wish, but be patient and persistent in your effort. At the same time, do not make yourself a mere copyist ; study should mean the cultivation and the expression of your own individuality. Individuality, though it may not be a very high quality, has more attraction to the human interest than a clever copy. Consult the illustrations of the very good specimens of European lacquer I have been able to secure for this book by the kind permission of Cora, Countess of Strafford, and of the authorities at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

If you use gold leaf for your subjects in the foreground and bronze for the rear, you will have the perspective effect and a variation of tints.



FIG. 9.—A RULER IS USED TO STEADY HAND IN LINING



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Refrain from handling the decorated article before the gold size sets quite hard, as it will mark easily and spoil the lustre, and the premature finish will result in a muddy effect. It should be left at least two days to set before you take the next step in the decoration, and the article must be thoroughly cleared of superfluous bronze and gold leaf with a damp cloth and a little soap. Hunt out all inlets and likely harbours very carefully, as these are enough to mar the whole appearance.

5. DETAILS IN BLACK LINES. Faces, hands, hair, creases and patterns of a dress, feathers of a bird, the rugged effect of a rock, the roof and constructional details of a building, the fibre of leaves and flowers, etc., are detailed by black lines. An oil colour black and gold size may be used for the purpose, but Chinese ink would be more suitable, for not only does it dry quickly, but you can wipe it off with a damp cloth without doing any harm to the gold when you make a mistake.

If you find the gold shows signs of repulsing the ink, wash it again with soap and water.

Too minute details are not worth the trouble in their effect. Bold treatment is more in keeping with the character of European lacquer, after the example of an old piece of work.

6. SHADING. Mostly, if not always, you see dark lacquer or walnut stain applied for shading. This is another characteristic of European lacquer, which is entirely the outcome of European conception. Paint the lacquer, in which a very small quantity of walnut stain is dissolved, with a No. 2 long hair brush on the portion of the subject where it is likely to have shade, but do not make the shade too strong and conspicuous.

Always keep two brush washers at your side, one containing turpentine and the other spirits, wash your brush thoroughly when you finish, and wipe it dry with a cloth, and stand it in a jar with the brush end upwards in such a way as not to bend the hair, and keep the end of brush well pointed (*see Fig. 11*).



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## CHAPTER IV FINISHING

### 1. *Painting and Finishing Lacquer*

**O**N this final process greatly depends the illuminating quality of lacquer decoration and the textural beauty and attraction of the ware. You find that most old European lacquer pieces are covered with ordinary varnish, but they appear to me to be largely as if they are painted for renovation. In very many cases it is difficult to see the decoration owing to the covering of a very dark varnish. I have never been able to conceive the reason for this crude varnish to hide such worthy material from admiration.

When all the decoration is quite ready and free from dust, paint the lacquer on the whole surface with all the technical care already observed, repeat this three times with an interval of three to four hours, and leave it for about two days. This operation should be conducted in a room which is free from flying dust, and, in the winter, the room should be warmed.

### 2. *Glass Papering and Polishing*

Take two strips of glass paper "flour" and rub against each other, then with this smooth the whole surface carefully, and avoid cutting the raised decoration, follow this by polishing with pumice powder "flour" and damp cloth, and clear all the paper marks and spots.

Finally, after the waste pumice powder is cleaned off, polish gently but firmly with whiting and linseed oil on a piece of cotton wool. Carry on this operation with patience until you get a perfect surface.

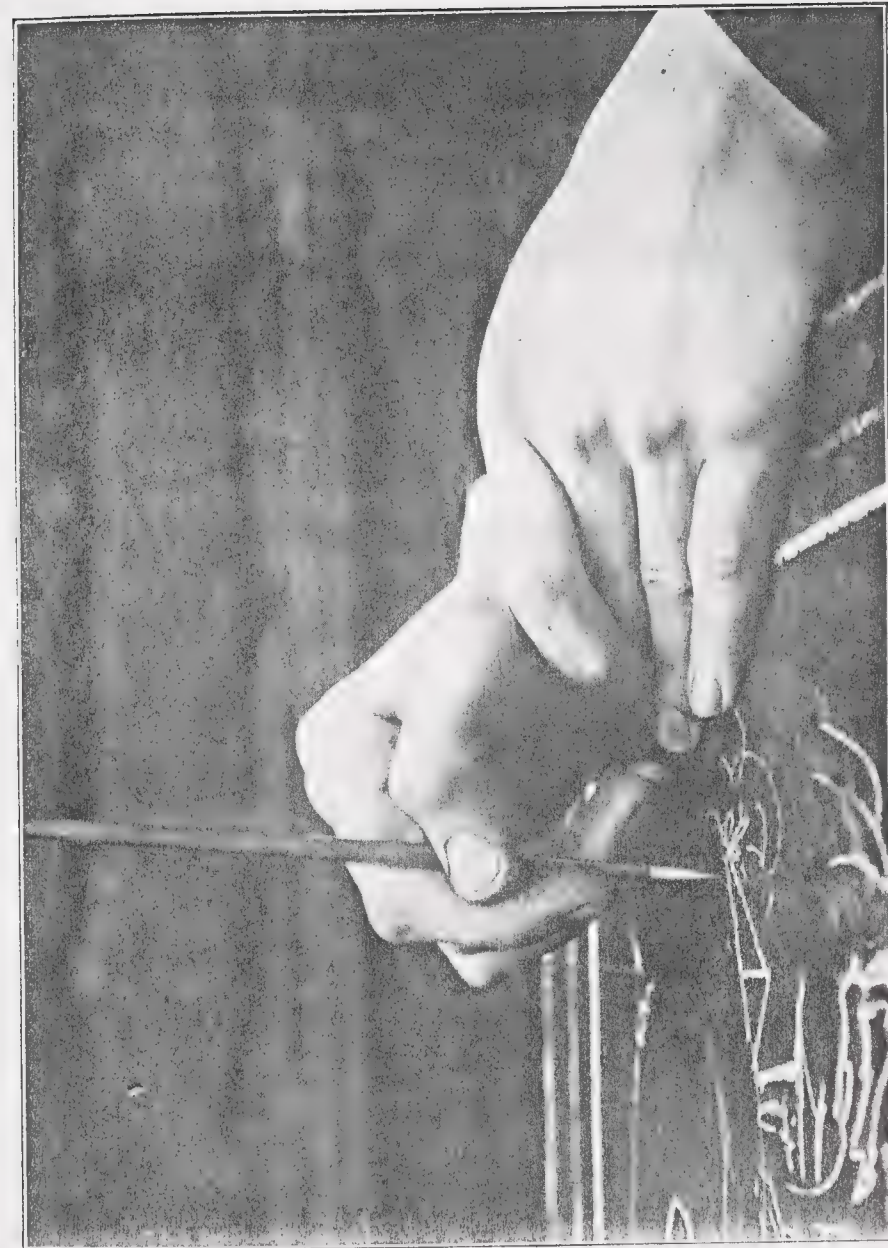


FIG. 10.—SHOWING HOW TO HOLD A BRUSH IN DRAWING FINE DETAILS



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All polishing should be conducted in a circular motion, systematically moving all over the surface ; do not continue polishing on the same spot too long.

The successful conduct of this trying but most interesting process should reward you with a result which you can be proud of, not only in your lifetime, for you will receive the admiration of generations to follow, and will possess something that has personal expression, pleasing to look at, charming to touch, perhaps an article of daily service and a companion to someone to whom you are endeared.



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PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

PHILOSOPHY 101

LECTURE NOTES

PROF. J. M. SMITH

SPRING 2004

LECTURE 1

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## CHAPTER V

### TONING

**AS** I have stated before, the vogue of lacquer really originated from the attractive quality of antique lacquer; accordingly, the greatest demand is for the antique tone; certainly a bright new lacquer does not harmonize with old furniture, especially with old lacquer.

Such is human sentiment, though the practice is the same: "faking" bears a black character, while "toning" is a taste. The art of toning is not a simple matter, and requires special study and particular ability. It is a matter of impossibility to get the effect of the crisp brightness of clear old varnish, but the effect of a "deep dark tone" and the effect of wear may be obtained by the following methods.

#### 1. *Lacquering and Scraping.*

When the first coat of finishing lacquer is painted leave it for about two days, and, with the use of a knife, very lightly scrape off parts of the gold decoration and general surface, especially at the edges and corners, where it would be most likely to get the brunt of the wear. Make it look as if it is natural wear, but take care to get no deep harsh scratches, or any marks which would give any indication of artificiality.

Break up the hard lines by small scrapes, avoiding long marks. After this operation apply two more coats of lacquer as in the case of finishing lacquer; then, on the top of these paint a coat of lacquer in which walnut stain is dissolved. As a crystalized form of walnut stain is a very powerful substance, in dissolving add little by little, allowing five to ten minutes to dissolve, and it should be made slightly darker than you require for the finish.

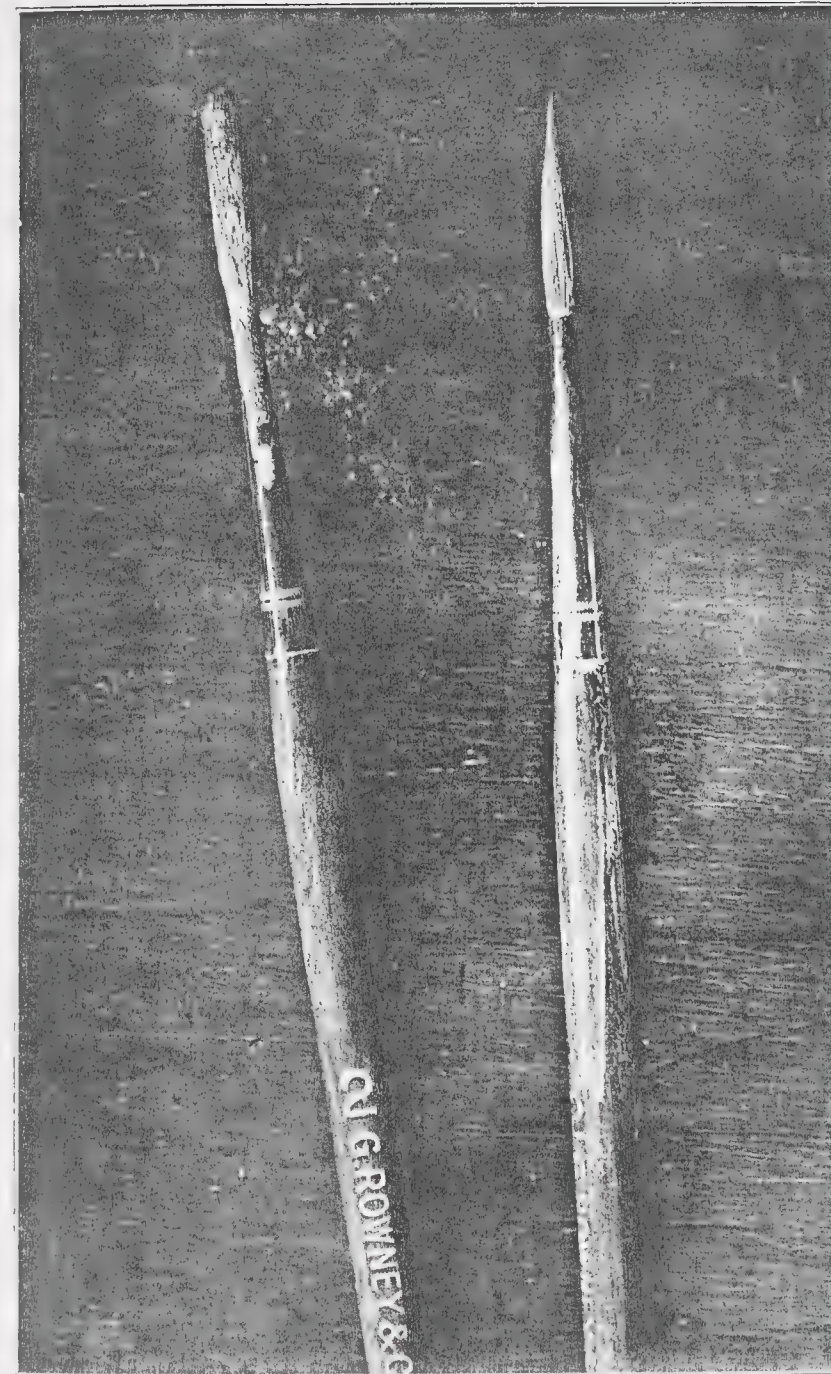
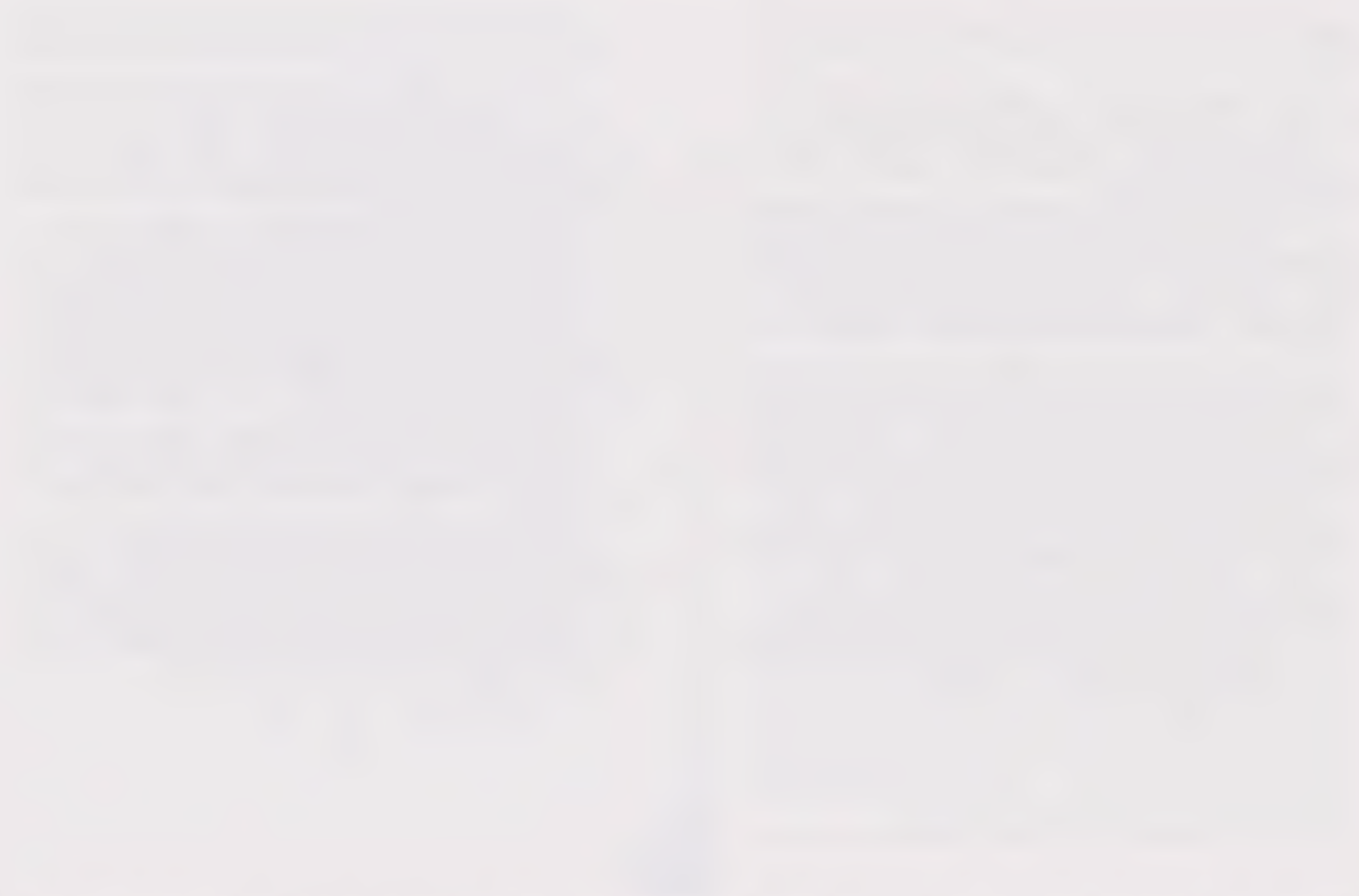


FIG. 11.—THE LOWER BRUSH SHOWING THE RIGHT WAY OF KEEPING IT





## *2. Glass Papering and Polishing*

After about two days the surface is lightly smoothed with rubbed glass paper "flour," then polished gently with pumice powder "flour" and a damp cloth, to such an extent as to get an age-worn effect of varied shades and tones, stronger at the inlets and surrounding the raised decorations. Take great care not to polish out too much of the raised portions and edges, as one is apt to exceed the desired limit.

When it is satisfactorily finished, wash the article free from powder and waste, then brush the whole surface with black boot polish and polish it lightly with a soft duster; a little dab of whiting on it will help in taking off the grease. It is important not to polish the corners and inlets; let the boot black remain in them, as glossy corners are a strong indication of newness. If you vary the amount of material according to your requirement the above method will give you any desired antique tone, but, for a lighter yellow, add satin wood stain, and mahogany for a reddish tint.

## *3. Cracks*

Cracks that are found on old European lacquer are generally due to the fact that a coat of French polish was applied to remedy the sticky effect of unsuccessful varnishing. As French polish dries much quicker and harder than varnish it stretches and tears the softer material underneath. Observing the same principle, gold size may be used instead of varnish, but the white of egg over a thick coat of lacquer produces smaller and neater cracks, as a rule the softer the material for the ground, the coarser the cracks. Into the cracks rub burnt umber in oil and wipe over with a dusty cloth to effect an old dry appearance.





CHAPTER VI  
HINTS FOR IDENTIFYING ANTIQUE FROM  
MODERN LACQUER



It is a recognized fact that handwriting is individual, and it is also asserted that from it the character of the writer may be told. Added to this, a man who is living to-day in Japan claims that he can tell your character, age, and your fate, by a stroke you make with a brush ; so much so that the personality will appear in any single action, and the personality cannot escape from the influence of the atmosphere in which it lives, in other words, from the spirit of the age. The current thought of the eighteenth century was distinctively different from to-day, and it is impossible for the artist of to-day to think in the same way and feel in the same way as artists of the eighteenth century, nor can he express in his drawing the sentiment which he has not. This undeniable fact should be the chief factor in deciding the age.

Conditions of articles, lacquer, varnish, colour, etc., certainly give you some guidance, as I have mentioned in the previous chapters, but material evidences are often very misleading.

Drawings on old lacquer are so original in conception, brush work so free, bold and strong in lines, real and graceful in expression, and it has depth and is transparent in effect. The work on the modern lacquer is coarse in touch and brushwork, and if it is fine is mostly done by some Japanese artists here, and oriental expression is revealed in the drawing and conception ; they may be copying European lacquer, but it is beyond them to get the same spirit, and the line is weak and has not the cultured grace of the old—the expression is wooden.

The use of many bright colours in the decoration is one indication of new work except on cream or yellow lacquer.

It is a mistake to be guided by the new varnish, or by the appearance of the general tone. However, it is impossible to convey by writing or any other means knowledge that is intuitive with those who are gifted with the particular faculty ; it is not a matter of education, but it must be a spontaneous understanding.

It will be interesting to note here the method of a well-known judge of pictures. He would first examine the end of the brushwork at the most unimportant part of the picture before he looked at the picture itself. His explanation of his method is, that an artist cannot help expressing his individuality in details, however unimportant they might be, even on a dot or simple line, while a copyist would or could only copy the general effect, and it is not possible for him to copy the individuality and the spirit which is expressed in minute details by the original artist.



Japan, it was the selected section—trying to catch up the pace—  
but not only in a narrow job, but in a wide of time  
and progress.

If the following is satisfactorily considered, with the article and  
be ready for the next process, which is the most interesting and  
attractive part of the work. The article must be given first from any  
this and still—look over all the corners where remnants of progress  
possibly take things.

Once again I would like to emphasize the importance of ground  
work. When you examine the value of Japanese work, apart from  
the value of antiquity, the first thing you see is the technical quality  
of the Japanese, second the artistic value of the decoration, third, the  
design of the article. If these three tests the value of Japanese  
work, it is not in any one of them means the future of the  
article.

It may be of some interest to consider how these three points  
lead to the history of Japanese Japan. As stated previously, the  
quality of the particular property of Japan has been known  
in remote ages in Japan, and gradually, from more usefulness,  
developed into decorative purposes with the progress of civilization.  
As a natural cause in the progress of an industry, the division of  
labor was also instituted in the Japanese industry, viz., designer,  
manufacturer, decorator. Since then they have made their independent  
progress or swayed under the influence of the law of supply and  
demand. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century the  
technical quality of applied Japanese cannot be very highly appreciated,  
but the design and decoration were of a quite superior standard.  
In a characteristic way, simple and conventional, it has attained  
a graceful beauty and classic dignity. The period from the latter  
part of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth  
century was the time in which the art of Japanese reached its  
highest maturity: rich, exquisite technique, luxurious elegance of  
decoration and design—all these so far as the developed, some  
might call it "maturity." However, its standard has never  
been surpassed and is not likely to be in the future.

Since then technique has made notable progress, but artistically,

it is from a few exceptions, Japanese work has been on the decline  
in the way in which it is regarded by contact with modern scientific  
education and commercialism.

The latter opinion report may be explained by the fact that in  
the modern period, Japan was chiefly applied in articles which  
were made in the Imperial Court by a certain number of people  
who were appointed, and with the passage of time, gradually became  
a common property, but it was still regarded as an article of luxury  
in the seventeenth century.

With the opening of the Tokugawa era in A.D. 1603, the trans-  
formation of the advanced state of the country turned the minds of the  
people to luxury and refinement, which gave new opportunities to  
artists and Japan was one of the fields opened for their operations.  
The most artists of the time took the lead, and various schools  
which were responsible for bringing forth "the great maturity"  
in the eighteenth century were founded: so that of this remarkable  
development it might be said that it was a direct inspiration of  
the late seventeenth century.

The rapidly increased popular demand naturally forced an  
increase in output, so the industry gradually passed from artistic  
production and finally to factory production to meet a huge demand  
that arose.

A corresponding study of the above facts will afford an interesting  
insight into psychological activity and results which the reader can  
prepare for himself if he visits the Victoria and Albert Museum,  
London. There he will find a wonderful collection of Japanese  
work, exhibited in a thoroughly systematic way. The words  
"luxury" and "art" are not exhibition, though the most of Japanese  
work certainly attract attention.



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